

Green Section Record

REGIONAL UPDATE

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Mowing the cleanup pass first gives equipment operators a visual reference of how much space they have to set the mower down.

WHY WOULD YOU CLEAN UP BEFORE YOU START?

BY ZACH NICOLUDIS | AGRONOMIST, CENTRAL REGION

Maintaining healthy and consistent turf near the edge of a putting green can be a challenge. The perimeter is generally the first area of a green to decline during periods of stressful weather. As such, superintendents implement a wide range of strategies to promote healthy turf in what is often referred to as the cleanup pass, but one thing that might be overlooked is when it is actually mowed.

Some mower operators rush to set the mower down after making a turn in an attempt to avoid skips. This can lead to setting the mower down too abruptly on the putting green perimeter and injuring the turf. It is not until they are making the cleanup pass that they realize they had plenty of space and more time to set the mower down softly.

Mowing the cleanup pass before the rest of a green is cut provides operators with a clear visual of how much space they have to set their mower down after making a turn. Assuming the cleanup pass is mowed

with the same mower as the rest of the putting green, instructing equipment operators to mow their cleanup pass first could help reduce turf damage.

If a separate mower is used for the cleanup pass, the logistics of how the individual assigned to this task can stay ahead of the putting green mowers will have to be evaluated. The golf course layout may make it possible for this person to move from green to green efficiently and stay ahead. Another option is to have this employee start their assignment earlier than the putting green mowers to ensure the cleanup pass is mowed prior to each green being cut.

Having a designated cleanup pass mower also allows you to assign a skilled employee to this task, which can increase precision while also providing an opportunity for someone with a keen eye to scout the golf course. This individual could monitor for inconsistencies in the dew patterns, signs of disease outbreaks or any other issues that may have developed overnight.

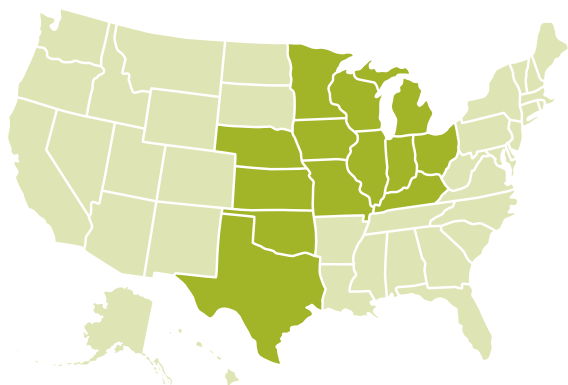
The potential benefits of mowing the cleanup pass first also apply to golf courses that mow with triplex units. Whether the cleanup pass is mowed with a triplex or a separate walk-behind mower, mowing it first allows equipment operators to have a better feel for when the reels need to be raised or lowered so collars are not scalped and putting green edges are not subjected to needless mechanical stress.

If you are dealing with weak putting green perimeters, it might be worth changing the way you do your cleanup pass. Making it the first thing that is mowed provides a nice visual of how much space one has to set their mower down.



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